

Council on Postsecondary Education

May 22, 2006

Kentucky High School Feedback Report

Postsecondary student data collected by the Council provides information to improve student success in college. The High School Feedback Report uses college enrollment data to help educators assess the preparation level of high school graduates who took the ACT for postsecondary work. This biennial report, designed in partnership with the Kentucky Department of Education and produced by ACT, was recently revised to provide clearer descriptions and interpretations of the content. The 2002 High School Feedback Reports will be available on the Council's Web site on May 22, 2006. Support materials were added to explain the tables in the report. Results for the 2004 class of high school graduates through fall 2006 will be posted later this year.

Public two-year and four-year institutions and independent institutions provide information about Kentucky high school graduate course enrollments, performance, and retention rates into the second year of college. District and statewide results are included to allow comparisons of graduates' performance with that of their peers. This report serves to stimulate community conversations about the support needed to continue to improve the college-going rates of Kentucky's high school graduates and their success in college.

Questions addressed by the High School Feedback Report:

- How well did students from my school or district perform on the ACT?
- Which postsecondary institutions were graduates from my school or district likely to attend?
- What grades did graduates from my school or district earn in their first year of college?
- What percentage of students from my high school returned for a second year of college?

Helpful ways to use the information in this report:

- Comparisons to district and state level statistics are meaningful indicators of student readiness for college.
- The most-attended postsecondary institutions and degree status tables indicate student enrollment patterns after high school graduation.
- Prior year reports may be used to assess overall trends but should not be considered equivalent historical comparisons because of recent data refinements and changing lists of participating institutions.

Findings

This report included 15,343 spring 2002 graduates who entered a public or participating independent postsecondary institution in Kentucky in fall 2002. Approximately 77 percent of the 2002 high school graduates who entered a Kentucky college are included in this report. High school graduates could not be included in this report if they did not take the ACT, enrolled in an out-of-state college, or enrolled in a nonparticipating Kentucky postsecondary institution. Unfortunately, information from only two independent institutions—Alice Lloyd College and Pikeville College—was included in this report. The Council staff is working with the Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities and hope that participation on the part of the independent institutions will improve in the future.

Reports are available for all Kentucky high schools where more than four graduates took the ACT and enrolled in a participating Kentucky college. Some high schools did not meet this threshold. District comparison information is available only for public high schools.

The report is divided into four sections:

1. College Attendance and Enrollment Patterns
2. College Performance Patterns at Four-Year Public Universities
3. College Performance Patterns at Two-Year Public Colleges
4. College Performance Patterns at Four-Year Independent Institutions

Students are divided into two categories: those with ACT scores of 18 or above and those with ACT scores below 18. Kentucky's mandatory placement policy established in 2000 requires institutions to reassess or offer remedial instruction to students with scores below 18.

While this report shows a college-going rate of the ACT-tested 2002 graduates of 55 percent, it is important to note that the actual college-going rate is higher. High school graduates who enrolled at an out-of-state institution or at a nonparticipating independent Kentucky institution are not included. Similarly, the first-year retention rate of 80 percent for the class of 2002 may change as more Kentucky institutions participate in the report. These figures are most useful as comparison figures between individual high schools, districts, and the statewide rates.

The report provides the most information about public four-year students, making these findings the most informative. According to the systemwide

standard defining “prepared” (ACT 18 or above), 26 percent of the graduates entering public four-year universities were underprepared in English. Among these underprepared students, 57 percent enrolled in developmental English courses in their first year, and 81 percent of the students passed the course. In mathematics, 31 percent of the graduates were underprepared. Among these underprepared students, 85 percent enrolled in developmental mathematics courses in their first year, and 67 percent passed the course. These findings support other research on student performance that showed more high school graduates must be better prepared for college, and colleges must work harder to help these students once they enroll.

Resources for College Readiness

Consistently for all three sectors, first-year college grade point average and hours earned increased as ACT score increased. Efforts underway to improve college readiness can improve college success. Much has transpired since the class of 2002 graduated, which should improve performance for the 2004-06 report to be issued this fall. Through its P-16 initiatives, Kentucky developed a number of resources to help students prepare for postsecondary education and to assist their teachers, guidance counselors, principals, and superintendents.

- The Kentucky Board of Education voted to raise the state’s minimum **High School Graduation Requirements**. These new requirements, which were endorsed by the State P-16 Council, include algebra I, geometry, algebra II, and mathematics every year. In the sciences, schools will be required to provide students with lab-based or inquiry-based learning experiences.
- The **Individual Learning Plan** is a required four-year curriculum plan that emphasizes academic and career development. This plan will guide the student’s course of study and extracurricular activities throughout the middle and high school years, ensuring that each student receives individualized services and support. The name of the plan has been changed from “Individual Graduation Plan” to emphasize its role in preparing the student for a successful transition to college and work. In 2006, the plan will be available to all middle and high schools as a Web-enabled resource integrated with the GoHigher Web site (see below). Early adopters of this new resource can help improve high school student success in college.

- The **Kentucky Early Mathematics Testing Program** (www.mathclass.org) offers a free, voluntary diagnostic instrument to help tenth- and eleventh-graders and their teachers assess how prepared students are for college-level mathematics.
- **Kentucky's GoHigher Web Site** provides information, resources, and interactive tools to guide students through the college planning process. Students can visit the GoHigher Web site (www.gohigherky.org) to create their account, do career assessments, take virtual campus tours, submit financial aid forms, and apply for undergraduate admission. This site also provides resources for counselors. Educators are encouraged to promote accounts on the site for all students to ensure they take the right courses to prepare them for college and the skilled workplace.
- **GEAR UP Kentucky-II** (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) will serve a new cohort of 6,000 students in 52 schools beginning in the seventh grade and continuing six years. Academic counseling, enrichment programs, and ACT Educational Planning and Assessment System diagnostic assessments for the eighth and tenth grades will help these students to prepare for college enrollment and success. GEAR UP also supports teachers with meaningful intervention strategies. The first cohort of GEAR UP participants enters college fall 2006. To learn more about GEAR UP Kentucky, visit the GoHigher Web site (www.gohigherky.org).
- **Kentucky's Statewide Placement Policy**, adopted by the Council in 2004 after extensive work with high school and college mathematics and English teachers, established clear, consistent standards of college-readiness so that students and their parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and others will know exactly what Kentucky institutions expect of entering students. Students admitted to Kentucky's two- and four-year public colleges and universities who can demonstrate specific skills in English language arts and mathematics (as indicated by statewide threshold scores on the ACT or SAT equivalents) will be guaranteed placement in college credit-bearing courses.

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